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Award Number: DAMD17-00-1-0145

TITLE: Mechanism of Mutation in Non-Dividing Cells

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REPORT DATE: July 2001

TYPE OF REPORT: Annual Summary

PREPARED FOR: U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command  
Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: Approved for Public Release;  
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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 074-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE July 2001	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Annual Summary (1 Jul 00 - 30 Jun 01)		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Mechanism of Mutation in Non-Dividing Cells		5. FUNDING NUMBERS DAMD17-00-1-0145		
6. AUTHOR(S) Rebecca Ponder Susan Rosenberg				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  Baylor College of Medicine Houston, Texas 77030  E-Mail: <a href="mailto:rp692236@bcm.tmc.edu">rp692236@bcm.tmc.edu</a>		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012		10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER		
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		20011130 040		
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
<b>13. Abstract (Maximum 200 Words) (abstract should contain no proprietary or confidential information)</b> Stationary-phase mutation is a mutational program that can be induced in non-dividing cells after exposure to environmental stress. We are testing the hypothesis that DNA double-strand breaks (DSBs) activate Lac <sup>+</sup> stationary-phase mutation in <i>E. coli</i> . In one model for stationary-phase mutation, recombination-mediated repair of a DSB is suggested to promote mutation by priming error-prone DNA replication. F plasmid transfer (Tra) proteins are required for stationary-phase reversion of a <i>lac</i> +1 frameshift mutation on the F'. Tra functions induce single-strand nicks on the F', which could lead to DSBs. We are asking whether DSBs introduced specifically near <i>lac</i> on the F' can substitute for Tra functions and activate stationary-phase mutation. To make specific DSBs, we constructed strains that express the <i>S. cerevisiae</i> endonuclease I-SceI from the <i>E. coli</i> chromosome. We find that introducing specific breaks at sites on either side of <i>lac</i> on a transfer-defective F' causes 50-2000-fold stimulations of Lac <sup>+</sup> stationary-phase mutation. This activation of mutation occurs only when both the I-SceI enzyme and cut site are present. The data imply that introduction of DSBs can overcome the requirement for Tra functions, and provide direct evidence that DSBs can activate stationary-phase mutation in the Lac system.				
14. Subject Terms (keywords previously assigned to proposal abstract or terms which apply to this award) breast cancer			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 10	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Unlimited	

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## Introduction:

Stationary-phase mutation, or adaptive mutation, refers to a collection of mutagenic responses that can be induced in stationary-phase (non-growing) cells after exposure to environmental stress. We would like to understand the processes that promote mutation in stationary-phase bacteria because similar mechanisms may be involved in mutation to antibiotic resistance in pathogens or genomic instability and cancer in higher eukaryotes. In the *E. coli* Lac system, cells carrying a chromosomal *lac* deletion and an F' sex plasmid with a *lac* +1 frameshift allele generate Lac<sup>+</sup> reversion mutants over time when starved on medium with lactose as the only carbon source. The mechanism for stationary-phase mutation is intrinsically different from that of growth-dependent mutation; it requires the homologous recombination proteins RecA, RecBCD, and RuvABC and the SOS-inducible, error-prone DNA polymerase, polIV. DNA double-strand breaks (DSBs) have also been implicated as molecular intermediates to stationary-phase mutation, although no direct evidence for DSB involvement has yet been obtained. In one model, recombination-mediated repair of a DSB is suggested to promote mutation by priming DNA replication using DNA polIV, during which polymerase errors occur. Cells carrying mutations that revert the *lac* +1 frameshift are able to utilize lactose in the medium and grow, escaping stress. We are asking whether DSBs can, in fact, activate Lac<sup>+</sup> stationary-phase mutation in *E. coli* and, if so, whether the mutation occurs in *cis* or in *trans* to the initiating DSB.

## Body:

The goal of this project is to determine the role of DNA DSBs and DSB repair in Lac<sup>+</sup> recombination-dependent stationary-phase mutation in *E. coli*. Although stationary-phase mutation appears to occur throughout the genome, on the bacterial chromosome as well as the F' sex plasmid, the frequency of mutation varies widely from locus to locus. For example, the F' *lac* +1 frameshift normally used in our assays mutates at a frequency of about  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  mutants per cell over the course of five days, whereas the frequency of mutation of a frameshift at the chromosomal *lac* locus is less than  $1 \times 10^{-8}$ . We hypothesize that DSBs activate mutation in stationary-phase, and the rate of recombination-dependent mutation at a locus is directly affected by its proximity to DSBs.

DSBs could arise naturally in cells from DNA synthesis across an existing single-stranded nick, an induced enzymatic activity in stationary-phase, or an increased rate of oxidative damage (and its processing by endonucleases during repair). We hypothesize that the chromosomal *lac* locus has a low level of stationary-phase mutation because it lacks sufficient natural DSBs. In the case of the F', we know that plasmid-encoded transfer (Tra) proteins are required for stationary-phase mutation, although actual conjugative transfer is not. An endonuclease called TraI induces single-strand nicks at the origin of transfer on the F', and there are many ways in which a nick might become a DSB, such as a nick on the opposing DNA strand or passage of a replication fork. We

hypothesize that Tra proteins activate mutation on the F' because they promote DSBs by providing single-strand nicks.

We are asking whether DSBs introduced specifically near *lac* on the F' can 1) activate stationary-phase mutation and 2) substitute for Tra functions. To make specific DSBs, I constructed strains that express the *S. cerevisiae* endonuclease I-SceI (similar to yeast HO endonuclease) under the arabinose promoter, P<sub>BAD</sub>, from *attB* in the *E. coli* chromosome. At the same time, I cloned the I-SceI restriction site, an 18bp sequence not present in the *E. coli* genome, into a defective miniTn7, hopped it throughout the genome, and isolated insertions to the left and to the right of *lac* on the F'. Once the desired hops were identified, I constructed strains that carry the specific I-SceI restriction sites on an F' deleted for TraI endonuclease and either the P<sub>BAD</sub>-I-SceI gene or P<sub>BAD</sub> alone at *attB* in the *E. coli* chromosome. These strains were actually constructed twice during the first six months of my fellowship due to a bacteriophage contamination problem we had in the lab. The reconstruction took nearly two months, but the new set of strains has shown no sign of contamination in multiple tests.

P<sub>BAD</sub> is induced by arabinose and repressed by glucose, so we can control expression of I-SceI in our strains. However, if we plate the cells on arabinose and induce DSBs, death is observed (only) in strains carrying both the I-SceI gene and a cut site. In the stationary-phase mutation assays I am doing, cultures of the strains to be tested are grown in minimal glycerol medium with 0.001% glucose added for repression of the arabinose promoter. Cultures are washed twice and plated on minimal lactose plates without arabinose, so any expression of the I-SceI endonuclease is driven by leaky expression from P<sub>BAD</sub> in the absence of glucose. The number of Lac<sup>+</sup> colonies are then counted daily until five days after plating. Under these conditions, strains carrying both the I-SceI gene and a cut site still exhibit some death, such that the number of viable cells drops three- to five-fold over the course of five days.

In repeated sets of experiments, introduction of specific DSBs at two cut sites to the left of the *lac* +1 frameshift on a Tra-defective F' caused dramatic 2000-fold stimulations of Lac<sup>+</sup> stationary-phase mutation (figure 1). This effect was DSB-dependent because no increase in mutation was seen in any of the controls with enzyme but no cut site or cut site but no enzyme. Likewise, introduction of specific DSBs at two cut sites to the right of *lac* activated stationary-phase mutation on a Tra-defective F'; one cut site gave a 50-fold stimulation, while the other showed a 1000-fold effect (figure 2). These results provide the first direct evidence that DSBs can activate stationary-phase mutation and imply that the only role of Tra functions is to promote DSBs. The frequency of mutation in strains carrying both the I-SceI gene and a cut site has been variable from experiment to experiment and culture to culture, although the conclusions have remained unchanged. Using leaky, less-controlled expression from P<sub>BAD</sub> is one likely source of the variability.

We would also like to know whether DSBs activate mutation by a *cis* or a *trans* mechanism. In the "*cis*" model for stationary-phase mutation I described above, a DSB that occurs near *lac* leads to an SOS DNA damage response and increased levels of DNA polIV. Repair of the DSB creates recombination intermediates that are proposed to prime error-prone DNA synthesis by DNA pol IV at *lac*. In this model, the initiating DSB, recombinational repair, and resulting mutation all occur in *cis* on the DNA. However, we could also draw a "*trans*" model for stationary-phase mutation which is initiated by a

DSB anywhere in the genome. In this model, a DSB leads to induction of the SOS response. Pol IV is upregulated during SOS, and makes polymerase errors in areas of DNA synthesis throughout the cell, in *trans* to the recombinational repair of the initiating DSB. If the *cis* model is correct, and the rate of recombination-dependent mutation at a locus is directly affected by its proximity to DSBs, then we should be able to increase mutation on a Tra-defective F' by inducing specific DSBs in *cis*, but not in *trans*, to the target. If the *trans* model is correct, then specific DSBs induced in *cis* and in *trans* to a target should both promote mutation.

I have already shown that specific DSBs in *cis* to *lac* can activate stationary-phase mutation on a Tra-defective F'. To test whether DSBs made in *trans* would also activate mutation, I created strains that carry either the P<sub>BAD</sub>-I-SceI gene or P<sub>BAD</sub> alone at *attB* and an I-SceI cut site at *upp* in the chromosome. In repeated sets of experiments, introduction of specific DSBs at *upp*, in *trans* to the *lac* +1 frameshift on a Tra-defective F', had no effect on Lac<sup>+</sup> stationary-phase mutation (figure 3). Unfortunately, we can not yet conclude that DSBs activate stationary-phase mutation by a *cis* mechanism because we have not yet been able to quantify the level of DSBs created at the various cut sites on the F' and the chromosome. We would also like to assay at least one other *trans* location on the chromosome and one on a third replicon where making DSBs would not affect cell viability, such as a plasmid.

All of the work described thus far has studied activation of stationary-phase mutation on a Tra-defective F'. I have also constructed a similar set of I-SceI strains to ask whether introduction of specific DSBs can activate reversion of a +1 frameshift at the chromosomal *lac* locus, a site notoriously cold for stationary-phase mutation. Experiments using these strains are currently underway. Please be aware that none of this material has been published, with the exception of the P<sub>BAD</sub>-I-SceI allele construction.

### Key Research Accomplishments (July 2000-July 2001):

- Gathered the first direct evidence that DSBs activate Lac<sup>+</sup> stationary-phase mutation
- Demonstrated that DSBs can substitute for transfer functions in stationary-phase mutation
- Mentored 3 students in projects dealing with mutation and recombination in *E. coli*.

### Reportable Outcomes:

#### Publications:

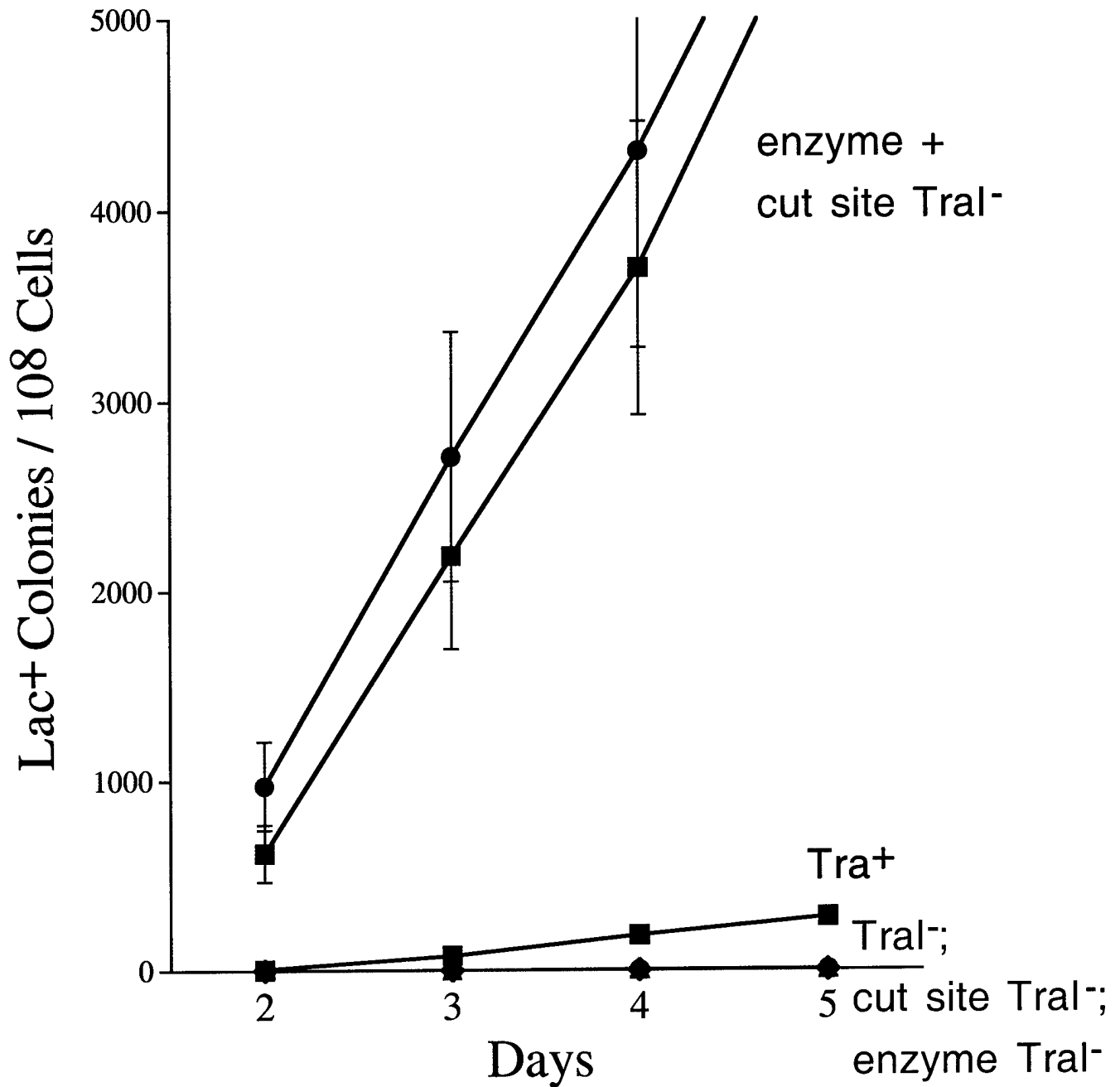
L. M. Gumbiner-Russo et al. 2001. The TGV Transgenic Vectors for Single Copy Gene Expression from the *Escherichia coli* Chromosome. *Gene* 273: 97-104.

## Conclusions:

The mechanism for stationary-phase mutation requires the homologous recombination proteins RecA, RecBCD, and RuvABC and the SOS-inducible, error-prone DNA polymerase, polIV. Some of these prokaryotic DNA repair and mutation proteins are homologs of human DNA damage response proteins; RecA is a homolog of hRAD51, which associates with the DNA repair BRCA tumor suppressor proteins, and *E. coli* DNA polIV, or DinB, is a homolog of four new human DNA polymerases: RAD30a (the XPV tumor suppressor protein), RAD30b, REV1, and DINB1. The mechanisms by which these proteins act in environmentally-inducible mutation are likely relevant to cancer formation, progression, and resistance to chemotherapeutic drugs in humans.

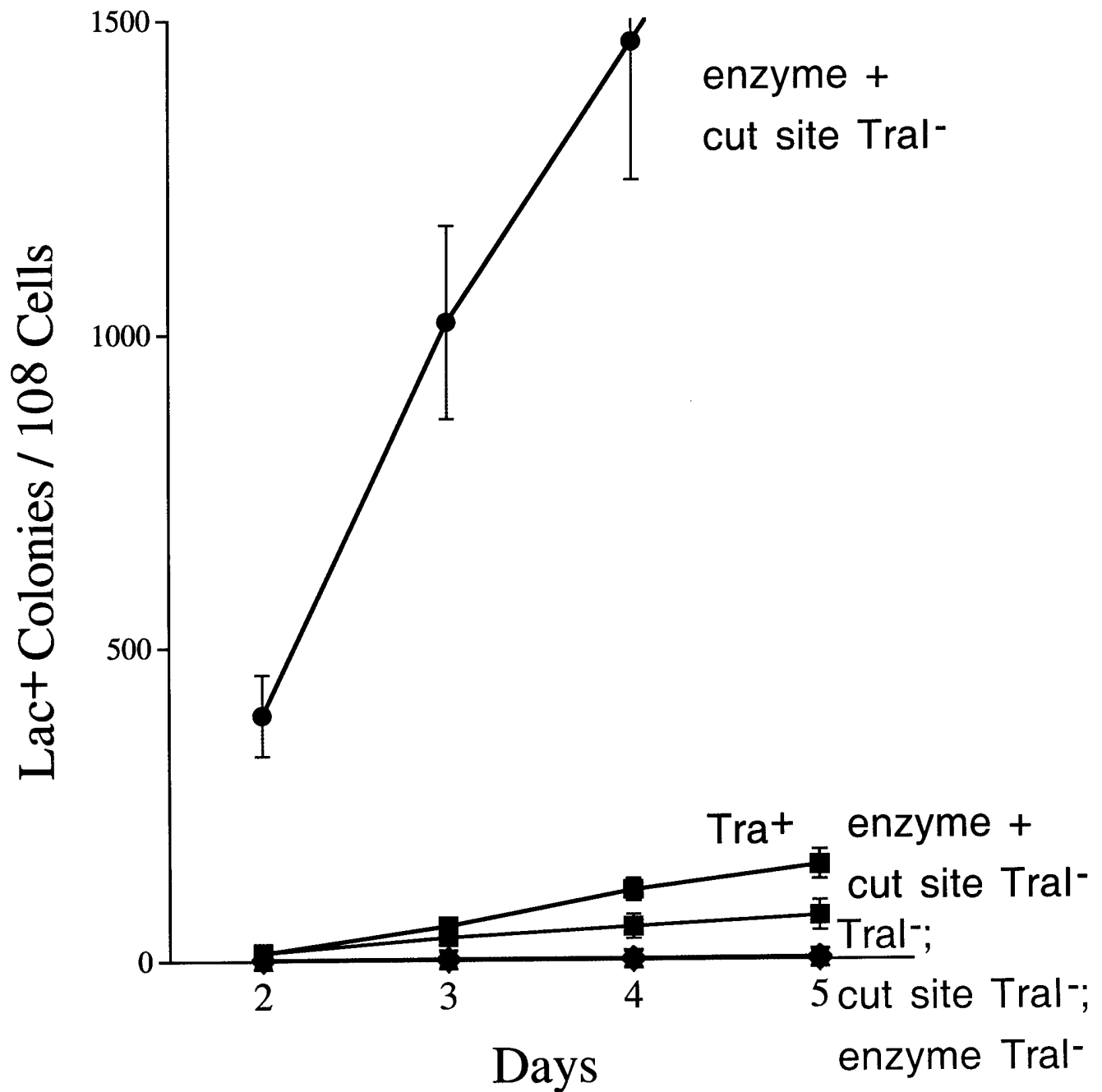
We find that introducing specific breaks at sites on either side of *lac* on a transfer-defective F' causes 50-2000-fold stimulations of *E. coli* Lac<sup>+</sup> stationary-phase mutation. This activation of mutation occurs only when both the I-SceI enzyme and cut site are present. The data imply that introduction of DSBs can overcome the requirement for Tra functions, and provide direct evidence that DSBs can activate stationary-phase mutation in the Lac system. Ongoing work in the lab is addressing whether DSBs activate mutation by a *cis* or a *trans* mechanism and asking whether the increased mutation occurs by a recombination-dependent, DNA polIV-dependent mechanism.

DSBs to the left of *lac* ↑↑ mutation





DSBs to the right of *lac* ↑↑ mutation



DSBs on the chromosome ~~mutation~~

